Fowl
Feathered
Review
№ 174

Issue № 174: *This issue is dedicated* to the untold story of the sentient doorknob who, burdened by the weight of existential angst and a tendency to stick, embarked on a journey of self-discovery through the dusty corridors of a dilapidated manor house.

Fowl Feathered Review is a quarterly, a disordered artifact of the human impulse to categorize and consume the ephemeral. Produced by the Springwound Mammoth Pancake Coalition—an entity distinct from its waffle-centric counterpart—it is birthed under the Fowlpox Press imprint. Virgil Kay, its editor, presides over this enterprise from a paper canoe adrift on the Passagassawakeag, a river of dubious depth and even more dubious inhabitants. Surrounded by featherheads and their aquatic card games, Kay's reign is absolute, his word the final arbiter in the transformation of boastful souls into doormats. Layout and visual conceits are the province of Cookie Granola, while melodrama and histrionics fall under the purview of Childe Harold. Silent Bill, in his characteristically taciturn manner, provides necessary pauses. The review's structural integrity, or lack thereof, is the domain of Unkie Bob, whose talents extend to the mitigation of typographical errors and the prevention of electrical conflagrations. Everett Enótita serves as Kay's indispensable amanuensis, and the Ecum Secum Literary Brain Trust, in a gesture of dubious beneficence, offers nominal financial support. Printed upon the verdant expanse of Bald Porcupine Island, and laced with the enigmatic Kraa, a bioengineered culinary enigma, the Fowl Feathered Review remains a testament to human ingenuity, or perhaps merely a symptom of cultural decline. ISSN: 1929-7238.

"I am an observer of life, a non-participant who takes no sides. I am in the regimented society, but not of it."

--Moondog, The Viking of 6th Avenue

Return Policy:
If this magazine does not meet your expectations, please return it to us in its original condition for a full refund, minus the cost of enlightenment.

Submissions

Fowlpox Press: A Submission Guide for the Determined (or Deluded) To the Aspiring Artist (or Sandwich Enthusiast):

1. **Craft** (or **Culinary Construct**): 2-227 poems, a numerical range that hints at both ambition and a troubling lack of self-editing, may find their way to our digital doorstep (fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com). Alternatively, for the visually inclined, paintings numbered 2-953 (a prolific career, or perhaps a basement overflowing with forgotten canvases?) are welcome. We are also, inexplicably, open to submissions of twelve-inch sandwiches.
2. **The Gatekeeper:** Address your offerings to Virgil Kay, Editor. In posession of remarkably discerning taste, or so he believes, Virgil is a rooster of some renown, a creature of instinct and inexplicable confidence. His title, “China Wok Habitue,” suggests a broader palate than one might expect from a bird, though it’s more likely a testament to the local takeout joint’s generous portions. (**Please note:** Include a bio, a desperate plea for recognition that will likely join the unread masses in the digital purgatory of our slush pile.)
3. **Format:** Poems, those valiant attempts at capturing the human experience in meter and rhyme, should be attached in a Word document or PDF. Paintings, windows into your soul (or a weekend spent with Bob Ross reruns), must be submitted in JPEG, TIFF, or a format our aging technology can comprehend. Jokes, if they exist, should be delivered in MP3 format. We are, alas, not equipped to handle the nuanced art of the live performance. Sandwiches, a curious offering in the realm of artistic expression, require clear plastic wrapping and a small packet of Kewpie Mayonnaise. (**Pro-tip:** The Kewpie packaging is, undeniably, a work of art in its own right, and we encourage you to admire it before consumption.)
4. **The Cycle Continues:** We exist in a perpetual state of acceptance and rejection. A Sisyphean task, some might say. We receive submissions 365 days a year, a testament to the relentless hope, or perhaps blissful ignorance, of aspiring artists. However, with a heavy heart (and a full crop), we must inform you that rejections also occur 365 days a year.
5. **The Sandwiches:** Ah, the sandwiches. These, unlike your artistic endeavors, find a permanent home within our editorial sanctum. Virgil, in his infinite wisdom, has determined that a diet rich in carbohydrates is essential for maintaining his regal demeanor.
6. **Leap Year Follies:** Leap years, those extra days gifted by the whims of the calendar, offer no reprieve. Aspiring poets, it seems, are undeterred by such temporal anomalies. You are, however, cordially invited to "take a flying leap" during these additional 24 hours.

Please proceed with caution. Artistic aspirations are a delicate dance, and the path to publication is littered with the fallen hopes of countless dreamers. But hey, maybe your sandwich is killer. Just remember, Kewpie or bust.

Fowl Feathered Review | Poets & Writers (pw.org)

“Non ignora mali, miseris succurrere disco.”

— Virgil, The Aeneid

Orchid on Hold

By Dominic Spleigh

Vignette 1: The Fender Bender & The Existential Invoice

The car crash was minor—a mere kiss between two bumpers—but it left Karl staring at the crumpled metal on his Smart Car as if it were a mirror reflecting his own existential dents. He had been driving home from Irony Island, where he'd spent the afternoon attempting to teach seals how to wear tiny handmade hats. They refused, which made him wonder whether their refusal was an act of defiance or simply indifference. His inflatable canoe remained intact.

The invoice arrived days later, its sterile numbers and impersonal tone mocking him in ways no human ever could. "Labor: $347.25," it read, followed by "Parts: $891.00." Karl underlined the word parts with a shaky pencil mark, imagining himself dissected on some cosmic assembly line. Was he more than the sum of his parts? Or just another broken machine awaiting repair?

As he filed the invoice into a folder labeled “Evidence Against Order,” Karl felt something new settle over him—not despair, exactly, but resignation. A quiet acceptance that life might always be this way: chaotic, absurd, and slightly cruel, like pigeons conspiring in Morse code above his head.

Vignette 2: The Shapleigh Road Meltdown – VHS Edition

In the attic of Karl's mother's house, there exists a grainy VHS tape documenting what is now known as The Shapleigh Road Meltdown. It shows a younger Karl—his hair wilder, his voice louder—standing in the middle of an empty road, screaming at the sky about the injustice of traffic cones.

Watching it now feels different. Back then, Karl believed his outrage mattered, that someone somewhere would hear his cries and fix the world. Now, watching the footage feels like flipping through old photographs of a stranger. That man on the screen seems so certain, so full of fire. How naive he looks, how hopelessly alive.
Karl rewinds the tape and pauses on a frame where he appears mid-gesture, arms flung wide like a town crier alerting the villagers. He wonders if anyone else has ever felt this way: simultaneously too big for the universe and yet impossibly small.

Vignette 3: The Annual Checkup – A Room Full of Personas

Dr. Albright's office smells faintly of antiseptic and regret. Karl sits on the examination table wearing nothing but a paper gown and his usual expression of mild bewilderment. Around him stand his friends—or perhaps they are fragments of himself, personified and clad in T-shirts bearing titles like "Karl's Persona #4: The Disappointed Botanist" and "Karl's Persona #9: The Sentient Sock Critic."

"How long have you suspected your left sock is judging you?" Dr. Albright asks without looking up from her clipboard.

"Since last Tuesday," Karl replies. "But I think it started earlier. Maybe when I wore mismatched socks to my cousin's wedding."

Persona #7 nods solemnly. "It's possible the sock perceives itself as superior due to its proximity to your heart."

Dr. Albright makes another note. “And the pigeons?”

“They’re getting bolder,” Karl says. “Yesterday, one landed on my windshield and tapped out ‘SOS’ in binary.”

She raises an eyebrow. “Binary?”

“Yes. Though I suspect it’s a ruse to distract us from their true agenda.”

There’s a pause, during which Persona #2 produces a kazoo and plays a mournful tune.

Dr. Albright sighs deeply, as though she’s heard worse explanations for insomnia before. “Anything else?” she asks finally.

“I dreamt I was an artichoke,” Karl admits. “A disgruntled one. Everyone kept trying to steam me.”

Persona #3 clutches his chest dramatically. “Oh, the humanity!”
When the checkup ends, Dr. Albright hands Karl a prescription for melatonin and tells him to avoid caffeine after noon. As he leaves, Persona #1 whispers, “Do you think she knows we’re all just figments?”

Vignette 4: Irony Island – A Maritime Meditation

Irony Island remains unchanged, save for the seals’ newfound fashion sense. Each animal sports a tiny knit hat, crafted lovingly by Karl during bouts of insomnia. Some hats feature pom-poms; others boast intricate patterns resembling constellations.

Despite these efforts, the seals refuse to perform tricks or acknowledge Karl’s presence beyond occasional disdainful glances. Still, he visits them weekly, bringing fresh fish and reciting poems about hope and resilience. Today’s poem includes lines like:

Though the waves rise high,
And the stars misalign,
Even artichokes find solace
In the sun's warm design.

The seals listen silently, their expressions inscrutable beneath their woolen caps. Karl wonders if they understand irony better than he does—if their refusal to cooperate isn't a rejection but a lesson in letting go.

Vignette 5: The Sunday Ritual – Payphone & Nostril Guessing

Every Sunday, Karl performs the same ritual: dialing his mother's number from the payphone across the street while standing close enough to see her gardening gloves flutter in the breeze. She answers predictably, asking about his health and reminding him to eat vegetables.

game involves guessing which nostril Karl is exploring with a handheld mirror. His mother guesses incorrectly, prompting a rare moment of levity as Karl laughs softly into the receiver.

"You used to do this when you were six," she says. "It's strange that you still find it amusing."

"It's tradition," Karl replies. "Traditions give structure to chaos."

After hanging up, he places a coin in the payphone slot—a symbolic gesture, since the phone hasn't worked in years—and walks back toward his mother's house. On the side of the payphone hangs a dandelion taped with a label reading "Rare Orchid." Karl smiles faintly, wondering if anyone will ever mistake it for something extraordinary.

Final Image The camera lingers on the dangling payphone receiver, swaying gently in the wind. Behind it, Irony Island looms on the horizon, its shores dotted with hatted seals

who seem—for once—to be smiling. In the foreground, a single pigeon perches atop the payphone booth, tapping out a message in Morse code: “Hope exists. Sort of.”

Merz Maze

By Chad Jacob

Hutchinson Camp, Isle of Man.
Terraced houses, a square's geometry holding
twelve hundred souls, mostly German, Austrian.
An artists' camp, they called it.
Intellectuals huddled, a displaced academy.

Schwitters, a character blooming in confinement,
a raconteur amidst the barbed wire.
Studio space granted,
he takes students, seeds future masters.

Two hundred works forged in this crucible,
more portraits than ever before, a commerce of faces.

Brick dust and sardine oil,
palette of necessity.
Clay unearthed on walks,
sculpture from the earth itself.
Linoleum ripped, mangled, pressed,
linocuts born of deprivation.
Porridge sculptures festering,
a Merz extension in putrid green,
blue excrements of the unseen,
a room thick with the stench of Dada.

He sleeps under the bed,
barks like a dog,
reads Dada manifestos to the captive audience,

a welcome madness in the mundane.
Epilepsy, dormant since childhood,
returns.

His son knows the hidden despair,
the work a shield against bitterness.
A good show for the world, always,
but in the shared room's quiet,
disillusionment bleeds through.

Concentration, a weapon
against hopelessness.

Tree Fort Unturned

By Kaitlyn Adams

From the tree fort's precarious perch, I watch Jerome unfold like a living palimpsest. He is no mere child caught in the amber of time, but a spectral curator of histories both invented and real. Jerome Altemeyer, age seven, 1978—his nameplate, brass and oxidized, is less a label than a talisman, a cipher for the impossible project he has undertaken: to archive not just the world, but its ghostly afterimages.

He appears first in a cracked photograph, tucked within a brittle album beneath the floorboards. His face is the earnest face of curiosity—a slight grin, eyes too old for a child, as if he bears the weight of all the questions the universe has ever asked. There is a sweetness in that smile, a kind of brave defiance against the encroaching entropy of memory. The photo edges curl and fray, blurring the boundary between paper and bark, between frozen moment and living thing.

Then Jerome slips sideways, becoming a shadow cast by the black suits and atop hat that lie abandoned in the fort. His silhouette stretches unnaturally long and bends with the shifting light, a murmuring presence on the rough grain of wood. The shadow is both him and not him—a liminal presence that refuses to be pinned down by linear time or narrative coherence.

And finally, Jerome steps into the streets beyond the fort, transformed into an old man walking slowly up the hill and around the corner. His coat is threadbare but carries the dignity of survival, his gait steady yet burdened by the knowledge of all the eras he has traversed. He is the archivist and the artifact, the child and the elder, the keeper of secrets and the ghost they summon.

Jerome's archive is a trembling act of resistance against the collapse of meaning. His books—encyclopedias of botany, astronomy, etiquette, and local lore—are not mere compendiums of facts but palimpsests layered with longing and irony. Each page,

inscribed in a child's careful hand, whispers: *I am trying to hold the world still, even as it slips away.*

This archive is a Fluxus score in wood and paper, a performance where history is both rehearsal and improvisation. Jerome's locked trunks, the medicine bottles with their faded labels, the black suits folded with ritual precision, and the stuffed parrot with its glassy, mocking eye—these are artifacts of a grand narrative half-remembered, half-invented. They speak of healing and harm, ceremony and abandonment, mimicry and voice lost.

The scene shifts; I find myself peering across to the neighbor's house from the fort's shadowed sanctuary. The present-day teal vinyl siding and impossibly fresh asphalt driveway blur and dissolve, shedding their newness like a snake's skin. I am transported back to 1978, to a house clad in peeling hardboard siding, its dirt driveway crowded by a 1972 Oldsmobile on concrete blocks.

A dog with one blind eye and scabby fur is chained to a tire rim, circling in a slow, resigned rhythm. Two boys in Red Sox jackets pass by, mouths stuffed with Slim Jims, voices thick with adolescent certainty: "AC/DC's the real deal, man. No one's gonna touch 'em." Nearby, two girls in spring dresses skip rope, their laughter weaving around the radio's faint strains of *"Reunited"* by Peaches and Herb.

This vignette is not mere nostalgia; it is a living tableau of memory's partial and fractured nature. It is both real and imagined, the past as it was and as it is always becoming—a slipstream of time folding back on itself.

Jerome exists in this fold, a figure caught in the oscillation between presence and absence, hope and futility. He archives the world with the solemnity of a scholar and the innocence of a child, embodying the metamodern tension between earnest striving and ironic awareness.

His shadow lingers in the spaces between objects and moments, a reminder that the past is never fully past, that memory is a kind of performance, and meaning is a dance between what we hold onto and what we must let go.

In the end, the tree fort is a fragile sanctuary, a locus where time fractures and recombines, where Jerome's archive stands as a testament to the human desire to make sense—to find continuity—amid the relentless flux of existence.

Jerome, the boy, the shadow, the old man, remains a haunting figure: a guardian of histories, a seeker of truths, and an emblem of the delicate, absurd, and beautiful human project of meaning-making.

End.

Mask Study

By Blaine Sutherland

(Part 1: Surface Tension)

The man occupies a folding chair, its metal struts theorem-cold against floorboards scraped clean of varnish or history. The venue is a Schrödinger's box of backstage possibilities – Bangkok humidity thick as mango pulp, Kittery Lions Club linoleum reflecting fluorescent tubes, the pixelated ghost-room of a video call. Digits probe a tin of Leichner No. 5, and application follows: forehead plane, cheekbone slopes, mandible curve. Strokes are calibrated, devoid of affect, like a cartographer mapping terra nullius. Red pigment comes next, forming a perfect, insolent sphere that adheres to the nasal apex.

Beside the chair, a canvas satchel, its blue bleached by equatorial suns and salt spray off the Isles of Shoals, spills its contents: Moliere, dog-eared at *Tartuffe*, Act III; a rubber fowl, neck tragically compressed; unmatched hosiery (three); and a diminutive notebook, spine cracked, emblazoned "Unit 8: The Shape of Things." A blink occurs, measured, the palpebral shutter speed slow. The mirror fragment, secured with duct tape exhibiting alarming entropy, returns only the constructed visage, the advancing *maschere*, not Jerome, whoever that constituent assembly might now be.

(Part 2: Interstitial Weave & The Zanni's Shadow)

...clouds executed impossible Euclidean proofs against the cerulean void, triggering synaptic echoes of Mask study, Unit 10 – The Inner Masks, the ones you wear to meet yourself in the dark. The reflection remained stubbornly two-dimensional: white, red, stark geometry against the smear of anonymous wall. A Musca domestica performed

intricate aerial reconnaissance near the sole, naked bulb. He selected a charcoal pencil, and lines accrued, thin vectors defining the ocular sockets, exaggerated arcs straining towards a hairline long since retreated. A sudden, precise flick of the wrist resulted in graphite scoring the greasepaint, a definitive mark, less artistry than a swift, physical punctuation – a visual *lazzo* delivered with the finality of a slammed door in a farce. He paused, contemplating the buccal region: Auguste vulnerability? Whiteface hauteur? The twitching ambiguity of the Trickster's smirk, Unit 9: Proclaim What is Sacred (By Mocking It)? The pencil point vibrated infinitesimally as reference was made to the notebook, bypassing "Unit 4: Exploring Failure (The Auguste)," arriving at pristine paper where a small, asymmetric interrogation mark materialized in graphite. Then, upon the face itself, a simple, downturned curve appeared, melancholy by the numbers, foundational, perhaps tragically predictable. One must, after all, establish the thesis before unleashing the antithetical seltzer bottle, establishing *Presence*, Unit 1: Its is-ness, its palpable is-not-ness. The fly achieved touchdown on the mirror, commencing meticulous leg ablutions, oblivious. He ignored it, a small triumph of focus learned perhaps in Unit 2: The Interfering Mind, and reached into the blue canvas repository...

The sensation wasn't unpleasant, this layering, like geological strata accumulating over the original Kittery bedrock. Behind the wall, perhaps not plaster but stretched parchment, something rustled, not rodents, but something drier, more papery, whispering forgotten stage directions in a language composed entirely of sibilants and regret. The air acquired a specific gravity, a faint charge of static electricity and the lingering scent of burnt sugar from a concession stand that closed in 1958. ...the frayed strap groaning under the specific gravity of accumulated certifications: Humanitarian Clowning (Unit 10: Practicum – the project notes still alarmingly vague), Satire (Unit 6: The High Status Idiot – a mirror held dangerously close), Shakespeare (Tragedy selection pending: the Dane's existential waffle, the Moor's ocular proof?). Always the question, the weight.

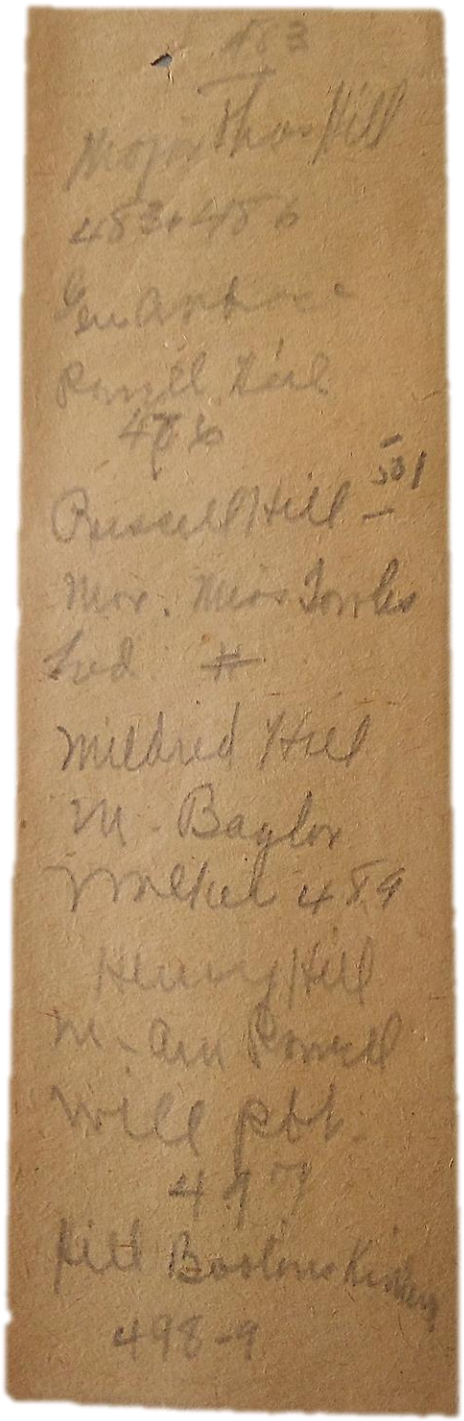
(Part 3: Fractured Time & Commedia's Ghost)

...a universe containing the half-digested metaphysics of Commedia theory and the desiccated core of a forgotten Macintosh apple. Steps echoed on concrete in Admiralty Village, Kittery, Maine, circa bell-bottoms and disillusionment. The Piscataqua was a

slick ribbon of pewter under the indifferent 70s sky. Navy housing presented geometry imposed on nature, boxes containing lives lived by the klaxon. *The Flash* comic book lay splayed across denim knees, a study in velocity, transubstantiation via primary colors. Unit 7: Your Clown Song remained an unheard melody, years distant, post-Oslo, post-Beirut shrapnel serenade, post-Unit 2: The Two Paths (Humanitarian). Gulls, nature's opportunistic Zanni, executed a flawless *burla* near Badger's Island Bridge, liberating fried potato starch from a slack-jawed tourist, a perfect, pointless choreography.

He rose, the man, the veteran clown containing the ghost of the boy. Greasepaint felt like a cool, alien membrane. Checked trousers, capacious, were suspended by elastic braces whose integrity felt increasingly metaphorical. Bridel, Funt: spectral mentors materializing in the flicker of broadband. *Teaching Clown*, Unit 7: Pedagogy and Curriculum Planning. The burden of transmission – Mime's eloquent vacuum (Unit 3: Technique 2), Commedia's chaotic physics (Unit 8: Technique and Form), the Trickster's necessary sacrilege (Unit 5: Ignore the Rules) – involved explaining the gag banana as cosmological query, an existential pratfall refined across continents, calibrated by failure, informed by *Presence* (Unit 4: The Body as Conduit).

He retrieved the rubber chicken, its vulcanized eye offering zero commentary. He reviewed the mental *canovaccio* for Unit 9: Your Own Routine, bracing for Unit 10: The Public (N=1 or 1000, the void stares back regardless). He applied pressure to the chicken's thorax, and it responded with a pneumatic sigh, a terminal wheeze, completing the closing sentence of the second section: the sound of a distant foghorn cutting through the Maine mist, a signal across the water demanding an answer, or perhaps just acknowledging the pervasive damp.



Calmo

By Jolanda Rice

The Cyclone's breath,
a slick wind,
funnel cake ghost,
regret's grainy taste.

He names himself Calmo,
a borrowed skin,
Venetian plaster flaked,
Nathan's damp brick clinging.

Not that Calmo,
dust motes now.
This one, residue,
heat shimmer above the Wheel.

No neon shout,
a small board, hand-scrawled:
"Improvisations. Dialects.
The Weight of Air."

Plum-bruised velvet, patched,
a mask – wrong.
Porcelain riverbed, cracked,
one eye weeping slick,
iridescent slow.
Glycerin? Seawater?
Something else entirely.

Not performance, but unraveling.
A single phrase dredged,
Sicilian undertow?
Venetian argot, pre-press hush?

Then cascade, torrent,
voices slipping, sliding,
hawkers, tourists,
seagulls' raw scream.

He becomes Tilt-A-Whirl's spin,
hot dog steam,
lost child's melting sweet.

Movements precise,
dancer's buried memory.
Bassadanza hinted,
Mesura warped,
slow grind,
courtly decay,
Cyclone's iron ache.

Pause, mid-tongue,
a discarded bun held,
Renaissance gaze,
lost manuscript weight.

Letters linger, they say,
Cyclone shed debris.
Water-stained brittle,
cryptic light angles,
spilled soda gleam.

Correspondences drift,
real? phantom?
Spectral Pietro Aretino,
arcade haunt.
Tintoretto charcoal,
burnt popcorn ash.

Pantalone spoken,
not character, but state.
Perpetual fret,
wheezing clutch,
purse a universe held tight.

Demonstration, body twisted,
grotesque wealth,
despair's raw edge.
No laughter from the crowd,
uneasy shift,
authenticity's pull.

Music unplaced,
calliope warped,
Cyclone's iron rhythm,
foghorn's mournful drone.

Conducted, broken umbrella,
jerky, wild.

No coins sought,
simply waits.
Next phrase surfacing,
next dialect undone,
absurdity peeled back.

Conduit, receiver,

echo of forgotten stage,
carnival's decay holding him.

And the air, always,

salt thick,
metallic tang unseen.
Humming beneath laughter, screams.
Brine and old parchment scent.

Rejestr Jaj Kłołna

Opowiadanie autorstwa Celestyna Franciszka Balbina Zuzanna

Joseph Grimaldi
Gdzieś pęka kurze „kukuryku”. Dźwięk łamie zastygłe powietrze – kruchy jak porcelanowy uśmiech lalki, łamliwy jak dziób, który dzióbem nie jest, lecz malowaną maską. Kostium – wybuchowa mozaika wschodnioeuropejskich wzorów ludowych, splecionych z kiczowatymi falbanami karnawału – kołysze się niczym porwany sztandar na bezwietrzu. Palce obejmują gładkie, białe jajko, chłodne i nieustępliwe, kruche jak oddech między zapomnianymi nutami kołysanki.
Grimaldi, pradziad klaunady, którego biel twarzy była tak jasna, że mogła być wyzwaniem dla samego księżyca, mawiał, że najlepszy śmiech to ten, który jest szeptem od łez – jak to jajko, cicha obietnica złożona w kruchej skorupce.
Jajko powoli obraca się na jej dłoni, glob tożsamości, miniaturowa głowa dźwigająca ciężar wielowiekowej klaunowskiej linii.
Później układa jajka na półce, rząd za rzędem ceramicznych muszli – identyczne kształtem, lecz niepowtarzalne w wyrazie, milczące zgromadzenie malowanych dusz.
Jej usta spożywają glinę.
Suchy piasek drapie język, wypełnia pustkę, gdzie kiedyś było prawdziwe jajo. Gliniana masa twardnieje w niej, milcząca przemiana, komunia z ziemią i sztucznością.

Gumowa Kurczak
Potem trzask! Pędzel trzepocze, jak bicz przecinający powierzchnię jajka. Farba syczy, osiadając, przysięga w błyszczącej emalii. Palce, poplamione kobaltem i czerwienią, drżą jak skrzydła uwięzionego ptaka. Połyka glinę, chropowaty łyk drapie gardło – ofiara dla ołtarza oryginalności.
Jajka nie kłamią. Są milczącymi świadkami przymierza, niezłomnym dowodem, że żaden klaun nie może dzielić tej samej maski.

Kwiat z Wodą
Widmo stadka kur unosi się przez szkarłatną mgłę, gdacząc tajemnice w języku pękniętych luster. Oddech smakuje wilgotną ziemią i zapomnianymi kołysankami, glina jest gorzkim echem kości dawno pochowanych pod porcelanowym niebem.
Gdzieś zegar cofa się, rozlewając czas jak rozbite skorupki na podłodze.
Malowane twarze spoglądają z półki – każdy krzyk zamrożony, uśmiech rozpływający się w cieniu zapomnianego żartu.

Charlie Rivel
Znosi jajko. Nie z ciała, lecz z rytuału. Ceramiczna kula wysuwa się z ukrytej kieszeni kostiumu, chłodna i pusta. Unosi je z nabożną czcią, jakby rodziła nowego siebie. Pędzel wraca, rysując znajomy wzór: czerwony nos, łza pod spuchniętym okiem, uśmiech półszyderczy, półżałosny.
Charlie Rivel, milczący mistrz, którego gesty mówiły więcej niż słowa, twierdził, że najlepszy żart to ten, którego nigdy nie usłyszysz – jak jajo zniesione, lecz nie rozbite, tajemnica ułożona w bieli.
Zatrzymuje się. Jajko jest suche.
Macza palce w mokrej glinie, nabiera garść. Chropowata masa dotyka warg. Gryzie.
Gliniana skóra smakuje kurzem i pamięcią.

Kule Do Żonglowania & Cadavre Exquis (Dokańczając zdanie z części III)
Trzask! Gliniana skorupa łamie się między zębami, sakrament połykany z powagą przysięgi. Karmazynowa plama rozlewa się po... perfumowanym liście, świadectwie jej zapomnianych obietnic.
Jej śmiech to stłuczony dzwon, bijący pustką w pustej galerii.

Nos Klauna & Cadavre Exquis (Dokańczając zdanie z części II)
Galeria oddycha pod ciężarem malowanych jaj, milczące zgromadzenie świadczące o absurdalnym rytuale tożsamości i wymazywania. Obserwuje, jak cienie składają się w pióropusze, widmo ciągnące... zapach soli i żalu.

Emmett Kelly
Oczy obwiedzione czernią przesuwają się po rejestrze. Nazwiska i twarze – każda wyryta barwą i pamięcią. Jajka ustawione w idealnym porządku, katalog klaunów dawnych i obecnych, forteca przeciw imitacji.
Emmett Kelly, smutny włóczęga, którego opadająca brew mogła pomieścić narodowy żal, widziałby te jajka jako cmentarz uśmiechów, galerię duchów noszących cudze kapelusze.
Wybiera jedno.
Jajko jest cieplejsze niż pozostałe, jakby żywe.
Dotyka powierzchni delikatnie, znów unosi pędzel.

Gumowa Kurczak
Whip! Pędzel nurkuje w ceramiczne ciało z rozpryskiem bieli. Ręka drży. Jajko wiruje, planeta w orbicie rytuału.
Znowu je glinę, każda porcja to chropowata komunia. Smak ziemi, smak trwałości.

Kwiat z Wodą
Cień zwija się pod półką, szepcze imiona, których nikt nie pamięta. Jajka mrugają malowanymi oczami, cicho śmiejąc się z próżności zasady – żadna maska nie może być powtórzona – gdy wszystkie maski są tylko fragmentami zapomnianych jaźni.
Jej oddech jest gliniany, serce pękniętą skorupą pragnącą wykluć się.

Philippe Gaulier
Stoi przed galerią w pierwszy piątek miesiąca. Drzwi się otwierają.
Philippe Gaulier, francuski mistrz, którego warczenie mogło wytrącić z równowagi nawet najbardziej stoickich, nazwałby tę chwilę „nagą prawdą błazna" – miejscem, gdzie maski zrzucane są tylko po to, by odsłonić kolejne maski, gdzie rytuał jest jednocześnie święty i absurdalny.
Jajka patrzą.
Kostium powiewa niczym ptak złapany w burzę. Znosi ostatnie jajko – malowane, popękane, niedoskonałe. Uśmiecha się spod maski, wiedząc, że tradycja będzie trwać, każda twarz to historia, każde jajko – milczący krzyk.
Połyka glinę.

Kule Do Żonglowania

Trzask! Jajko spada na podłogę, rozbijając się bezgłośnie na tysiące fragmentów koloru i pamięci.
Publiczność pochyla się do przodu, wstrzymując oddech.

Nos Klauna

Pojedyncze piórko opada przez światło galerii, nietknięte czasem i grawitacją, duch skrzydeł, które nigdy nie wzbiły się w lot. Zapach gliny i farby unosi się w powietrzu, kruchej obietnicy, widma ciągnącego... zapach soli i żalu.

Rozbudowana Imersja Sensoryczna i Fragmentaryczna Narracja

Pędzel znów macza się w farbie, ręka chirurga prowadzi linię będącą jednocześnie więzieniem i wolnością. Karmazynowa czerwień rozlewa się jak świeża żałość po białej skórze skorupy. Jajko wiruje, mała planeta krążąca w grawitacji rytuału i obsesji.
Na zewnątrz wiatr niesie odległą muzykę karnawału, zniekształconą walczyk na złamanym kaliope. Zapach wilgotnego siana miesza się z ostrym wonią rozpuszczalnika, duchowym bukietem martwej sztuki klaunady.
Znów smakuje glinę – chropowatą, suchą, mineralny smak ziemi na języku – komunię z absurdem i wiecznością.
Gumowy kurczak leży porzucony na podłodze, jego pisk stłumiony przez kurz. Milczący świadek niezliczonych przedstawień, relikt kruchej architektury śmiechu.
Jajka obserwują ją, ich malowane twarze to galeria zamrożonych ekspresji: radości, smutku, figlarności, rozpaczy. Żadne niepowtarzalne, lecz wszystkie fragmenty tej samej pękniętej duszy.
Na zewnątrz galeria zegar cofa się, rozlewając czas jak rozbite skorupki. Gdzieś wznosi się szeptany śpiew – wezwanie do porządku w chaosie, błaganie o sens tam, gdzie go nie ma.

Ostateczne Echo Intertekstualne

Układa ostatnie jajko na półce, kruche pomnik niemożliwej wędrówki ku jedyności. Połyka glinę jeszcze raz – chropowaty smak ziemi, pamięci, niekończącego się cyklu tworzenia i destrukcji.
Malowane twarze patrzą z powrotem, milczące jak grób, śmiejąc się z absurdalności wszystkiego.
Drzwi galerii zamykają się.
Zapach soli i żalu pozostaje.

Epilog (Fluxusowski Score dla Czytelnika)
Instrukcja: *Weź rozbitą skorupkę z podłogi. Szepnij jej imię zapomnianego klauna. Zamknij oczy i poczuj ciężar ich milczącego śmiechu. Pokrusz ją w dłoni. Niech kawałki rozpuszczą się jak pamięć w glebie pod twoimi stopami.*

The Clown Hen's Register

Translated from the Polish by Kunegunda Agatka Seweryna Laura Michalak

Joseph Grimaldi

She clucks. The sound cracks the stale air, brittle as a porcelain doll's smile, a brittle articulation of a beak that is not a beak but a painted mask. Her costume, a riotous patchwork stitched from the folk patterns of Eastern Europe tangled with the gaudy ruffles of carnival excess, sways like a ragged banner in a windless storm. Her fingers cradle a smooth white egg, cool and unyielding, fragile as the breath between notes in a forgotten lullaby.

Grimaldi, the great-grandfather of clowning, whose whiteface was so pale it could have been a dare to the moon itself, once joked that the best laugh was a whisper away from tears—just like this egg, a silent promise folded in fragile shell.

The egg spins slowly on her palm, a globe of identity, a miniature head bearing the weight of centuries-old clown lineage.

Later, she places the eggs on a shelf lined with hundreds of ceramic shells, each identical in shape but singular in visage, a silent congress of painted souls.

She eats clay.

The dry grit scratches at her tongue, filling the void where once a real egg might have existed. The clay hardens inside her, a silent metamorphosis, a communion with earth and artifice.

Rubber Chicken

Then snap! The brush flicks, a whip-crack of color slicing the egg's surface. The paint hisses as it settles, a pact sealed in glossy enamel. Her fingers, stained with cobalt and vermilion, tremble like the wings of a trapped bird. She swallows clay, a gritty gulp that scratches its way down her throat—a sacrificial offering to the altar of originality.

The eggs do not lie. They are the silent witnesses to a covenant, the unyielding proof that no two clowns may mirror the same mask.

Squirting Flower
A flock of spectral hens drifts through a scarlet fog, clucking secrets in a tongue of cracked mirrors. Her breath tastes of damp earth and forgotten lullabies, the clay a bitter echo of bones long buried beneath cracked porcelain skies. Somewhere, a clock unwinds backward, spilling time like shattered eggshells across the floor.
The painted faces stare from the shelf—each a frozen scream, a smile that dissolves into the shadow of a forgotten jest.

Charlie Rivel
She lays an egg. Not from flesh but from ritual. The ceramic sphere slides from a hidden compartment in her costume, cool and empty. She lifts it with reverence, as if birthing a new self. The brush returns, tracing the familiar pattern: the red nose, the tear-shaped drop beneath a swollen eye, the curve of a smile half-mocked, half-mourned.
Charlie Rivel, the silent master whose gestures spoke more than words ever could, once claimed that the best joke was the one never heard – much like the egg laid but never cracked, a secret folded in white.
She pauses. The egg is dry.
She dips her fingers into a bowl of wet clay, scooping a handful. The gritty paste presses against her lips. She bites.
Clay tastes of dust and memory.

Juggling Pins & Exquisite Corpse (Completing Part III's Sentence)
Snap! The clay crunches between teeth, a sacrament swallowed with the solemnity of a vow. The crimson stain spread across the... perfumed letter, a testament to her forgotten promises.
Her laughter is a cracked bell, ringing hollow in the empty gallery.

Clown Nose & Exquisite Corpse (Completing Part II's Closing Sentence)
The gallery breathes beneath the weight of painted eggs, a silent congregation bearing witness to the absurd ritual of identity and erasure. She watches shadows fold themselves into feathered shapes, a phantom trailing... the scent of brine and regret.

Emmett Kelly
Her eyes, rimmed with black, scan the register. Names and faces, each etched in pigment and memory. The eggs are lined in perfect order, a catalog of clowns past and present, a fortress against imitation.
Emmett Kelly, the sad tramp whose drooping eyebrow could hold a nation's sorrow, might have seen these eggs as a cemetery of smiles, a gallery of ghosts wearing borrowed hats.
She selects one.
The egg is warmer than the rest, as if alive.
She touches the surface lightly, then raises the brush again.

Rubber Chicken
Whip! The brush dives into the ceramic flesh with a splash of white. Her hand trembles. The egg spins, a planet in orbit around her ritualistic gravity.
She eats the clay again, each mouthful a gritty communion. The taste of earth, the taste of permanence.

Squirting Flower
A shadow curls beneath the shelf, whispering names no one remembers. The eggs blink with painted eyes, laughing silently at the futility of the rule—no two faces may share the same mask—when all masks are but fragments of forgotten selves.
Her breath is clay-stained, her heart a cracked shell longing to hatch.

Philippe Gaulier
She stands before the gallery on the first Friday of the month. The doors open.
Philippe Gaulier, the French master whose growls could unsettle the stoniest of hearts, would have called this moment the "naked truth of the fool" – a place where masks are shed only to reveal other masks, where the ritual is both sacred and absurd.
The eggs watch.
Her costume flutters like a bird caught in a storm. She lays one last egg—painted, cracked, imperfect. She smiles beneath the mask, knowing the tradition will continue, each face a story, each egg a silent scream.
She swallows clay.

Juggling Pins

Crack! The egg hits the floor, shattering soundlessly into a thousand fragments of color and memory.
The audience leans forward, breath held.

Clown Nose

A single feather drifts down through the gallery light, untouched by time or gravity, a ghost of wings that never flew. The scent of clay and paint lingers, a fragile promise in the air, a phantom trailing... the scent of brine and regret.

Expanded Sensory Immersion & Fractured Narrative Insertions

The brush dips again, a tentative surgeon's hand tracing lines that are both prison and liberty. The red pigment bleeds like fresh regret into the white shell's skin. The egg spins, a tiny planet revolving in the gravity of ritual and obsession.
Outside, the wind carries the faint sound of carnival music, a distorted waltz played on a broken calliope. The scent of damp hay mixes with the acrid tang of paint thinner, a ghostly bouquet for the dead art of clowning.
She tastes clay again – gritty, dry, the mineral tang of earth pressed to tongue – a communion with the absurd and the eternal.
A rubber chicken lies discarded on the floor, its squeak muffled by dust. It is the silent witness to countless performances, a relic of laughter's fragile architecture.
The eggs watch her, their painted faces a gallery of frozen expressions: joy, sorrow, mischief, despair. No two alike, but all fragments of the same fractured soul.
Outside the gallery, a clock unwinds backward, spilling time like spilled eggshells. Somewhere, a whispered chant rises – a call to order in the chaos, a plea for meaning where none may be found.

Final Intertextual Echo

She places the last egg on the shelf, a fragile monument to the impossible quest for singularity. She swallows clay once more – the gritty taste of earth, memory, and the endless cycle of creation and destruction.
The painted faces stare back, silent as the grave, laughing with the absurdity of it all.
The gallery doors close.

The scent of brine and regret lingers.

Epilogue (A Fluxus Event Score for the Reader)
Instruction: Take a cracked egg shell from the floor. Whisper a forgotten clown's name into it. Close your eyes and feel the weight of their silent laughter. Crumble the shell into your palm. Let the fragments dissolve like memory in the soil beneath your feet.

Allardyce Nicoll, *The World of Harlequin: A Critical Study of the Commedia dell'Arte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Böll, Heinrich, 1917-1985. 1965. *The Clown.*. McGraw-Hill.

Freeman, Matthew. 2006. "Reconsidering the Effects of Monosodium Glutamate: A Literature Review." Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners 18, no. 10 (October)

Marino, Lori. "Thinking Chickens: A Review of Cognition, Emotion, and Behavior in the Domestic Chicken." Animal Cognition 20, no. 2 (2017): 127-47.

Zhang, Yongfu, Yuan Yang, Wing YT Lau, Samradhvi Garg, and Jianxin Lao. "Effectiveness of Pre-operative Clown Intervention on Psychological Distress: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis." Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health 53, no. 3 (2017): 237-45.